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March 8, 2005

Joint Policy Committee  
Joseph P. Bort MetroCenter  
101 Eighth Street, P.O. Box 2050  
Oakland, CA 94607-4756

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MTC

Dear Joint Policy Committee:

I am writing to support the MTC and Joint Policy Committee's steps toward connecting land use to transit, but I am concerned the proposed policy will not be effective. I urge you to strengthen the policy by adopting the Greenbelt-Alliance-endorsed Livable Communities Platform, which will help ensure good land use around transit stations.

With a Regional Transit-Oriented Development Policy, MTC has the opportunity to help create livable communities that support transit investment. Planning for housing, jobs and shops near transit supports our transit investments-and also creates great places to live, work and play. Guiding development towards transit routes in developed areas keeps cities from sprawling onto open spaces.

I know that MTC is considering a policy that calls for a certain amount of housing and jobs along transit corridors as a measure for growth. While I applaud the focus on housing, I am concerned that the proposed policy leaves too much room for the possibility of poorly planned station areas. Setting a combined threshold for housing and jobs would allow cities to plan for offices and shops only, without a balance of housing. Also, a policy without specific land use and design guidelines could allow big-box stores and excessive parking, which destroy the pedestrian and bike environment. Furthermore, the current proposal does not address the need for housing affordable to families earning low incomes, the very people who need housing and use transit most.

I urge you to adopt the following Livable Communities Platform as part of a Regional Transit Oriented Development Policy. Before MTC funds transit expansion projects, cities should have to:

- Plan for compact development so that at least half the new housing built in the Bay Area is located in the half-mile radius station areas.
- Promote affordable housing in station areas.
- Prohibit big-box developments in station areas.
- Create plans to minimize the space dedicated to parking in station areas.
- Develop bicycle and pedestrian plans for safe routes to and within station areas.

I know that it is critical that MTC have the input and support of the public and local community groups on this issue. I am eager to support a policy linking transportation funds to land use, but in its current state, this policy may be ineffective and may backfire in a number of cities.

Sincerely,

*Melissa Mandel*

Melissa Mandel, 7535 Valentine St., Oakland 94605